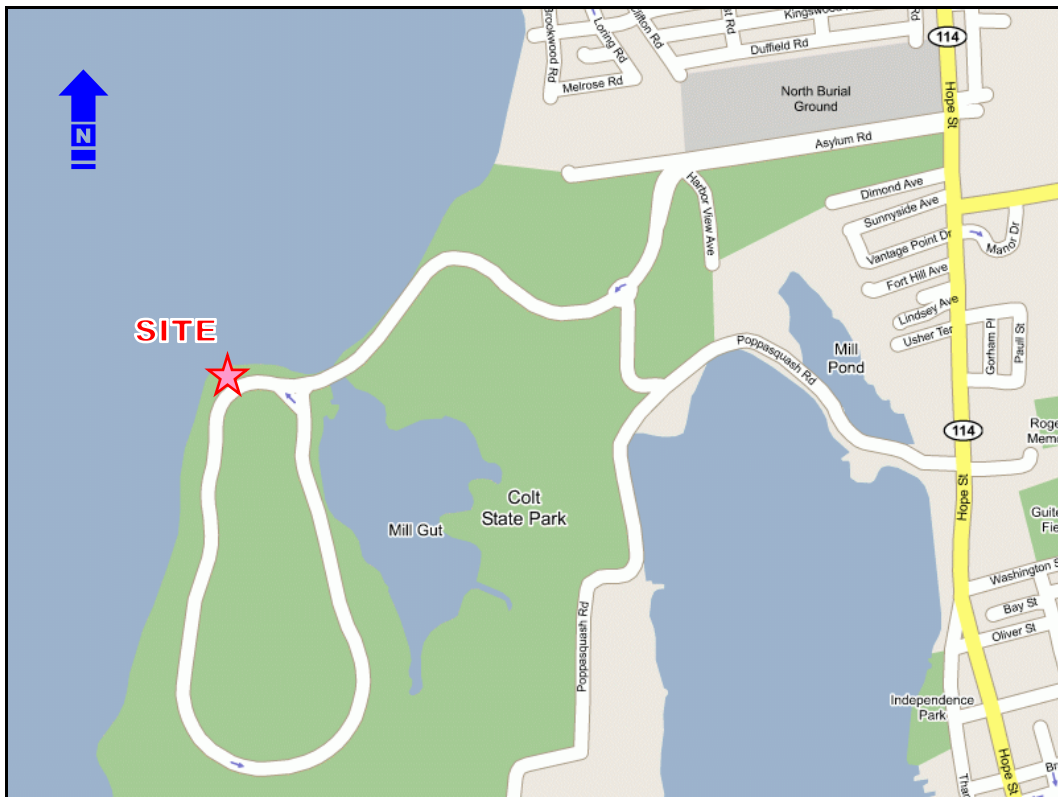


Site No. 5

COLT STATE PARK

Bristol
State Route 114 (Hope Street)



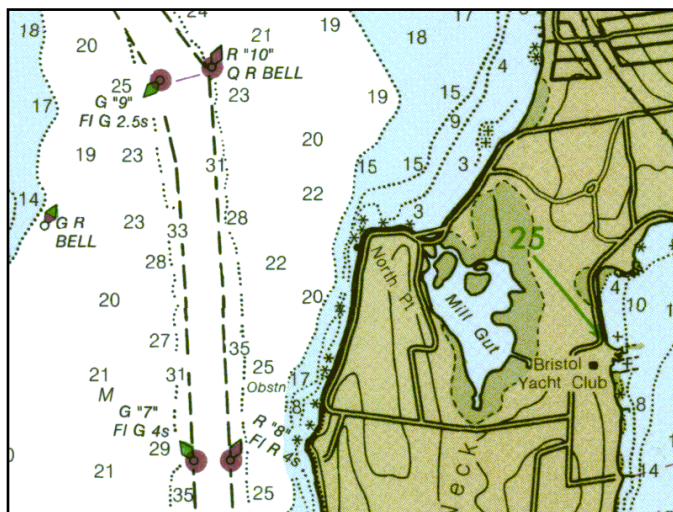
COLT STATE PARK

Site Description

Located off of State Route 114 along Poppasquash Neck in Bristol, Colt State Park is a state-owned public recreation facility maintained and operated by the RIDEM. The park currently offers ample shoreline frontage, several open grassed fields, and well-maintained facilities which support a multitude of outdoor recreation activities. Recreational fishing at the site occurs mostly along the westerly and northerly shorelines, the later of which includes a small fishing pier/dock. Immediately east of this pier, a small tidal inlet (Mill Gut) also offers enjoyable fishing opportunities near the two bridges at its mouth.

Location Assessment

Bay Location. The site is located within the upper reach of Narragansett Bay as broadly defined by the shorelines of Warwick, Barrington and Bristol. Waters in the vicinity of this site currently do not meet aquatic life support criteria. Causes for water quality impairment include low oxygen concentration, presence of viral and bacterial pathogens, and nutrient enrichment. Due to pathogens, these waters are conditionally closed to shellfishing following heavy rains. These waters have however been designated a water quality goal of SA (high quality) by the RIDEM (see Appendix B).



As reported by participants of the Online Recreational Fishing Survey, common catch in this region consists primarily of Striped Bass and Bluefish (reported spring - fall), with Tautog and Scup also indicated. Skipjacks were also abundant in the vicinity of the Mill Gut inlet at the time of site visit. Popular fishing spots within the site include the westerly shoreline (see Photo 1), the existing fishing pier (Photo 4), and along the bridge near the entrance of Mill Gut (Photos 6, 7).

Water uses along this stretch of shore consist primarily of boating and sailing, and a RIDEM-managed boat launch is located within the park approximately ½ mile northeast of Mill Gut. "No Swimming" signs are posted along the length of the shoreline study area. Further north along the shoreline at the end of Asylum Road, Bristol Town Beach supports more typical beach-going uses. The federally regulated navigation channel runs roughly parallel to the westerly shoreline, approximately 2,300 feet from North Point (see nautical chart image above).

Land Location. Accessed directly from State Route 114 (Hope Street) via Asylum Road, Colt State Park offers ample space to support a multitude of outdoor activities, including walking, bicycling, picnicking, group gatherings, camping, sports, etc. The park serves a large visitor base which is likely to include greater Providence, Newport County and Southeast Massachusetts. Along the shoreline to the immediate north (at the end of Asylum Road), Bristol Town Beach and Recreation Area offers similar recreational opportunities and is host to several municipal sports leagues.

Land use surrounding the park consists primarily of a mixture of residential and recreational uses. The East Bay Bike Path runs through the area near the park entrance, and the Bristol Harbor and Yacht Club are located along the easterly side of Poppasquash Neck. As an arterial 2-lane roadway through the East Bay, Route 114 typically experiences mild to moderate congestion during periods of peak use. The town center of Bristol is approximately 1.5 miles south of the park entrance along Route 114.

Environmental Constraints and Permitting. This stretch of Colt State Park features a manmade rip rap shoreline which supports a pedestrian/bicycle path along the water for most of its length (see Photos 1, 3). The natural rocky shore below the high tide line is characterized by occasional stands of salt marsh cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) as well as some kelp and barnacles, though there is no known eelgrass in this area. The coastal feature is the riprap revetment. This area is classified by the CPMC as Type 2 (Low-Intensity Use) waters.

Facilities Assessment

Colt State Park is well-known throughout the region for its excellent park facilities and site aesthetics. The site currently offers a good range of opportunities for anglers of different preferences and skill levels, as fishing occurs along the manmade westerly shoreline, from the fishing pier, and at the entrance to Mill Gut. The existing timber T-pier (see Photos 3, 4, 5) is in good condition and includes a bait cutting board, benches, and a floating boat dock, though according to anglers it is seldom used for boating purposes. The narrow spacing of bollards at the pier entrance (Photo 4) may limit the handicap accessibility of this structure. Its relatively short length and location along the northerly shoreline (see nautical chart image) also do not appear to offer substantially improved access to deeper waters in the area.

Fishing is also popular at the Mill Gut entrance, as swift tidal currents through this opening offer quality angling for smaller fish at this location. While only observed along the riprap armored banks (see Photos 6, 7), fishing is also permitted from the pedestrian/bicycle bridge as well.

Parking within the site is ample, with several small lots interspersed within the park and along the internal access road near the shoreline fishing areas (see Photos 8A and 8B). Vehicles are also permitted to park on certain grassed picnic areas and fields within the interior of the park. As with all RIDEM-operated state parks, the facility is open from sunrise to sunset and there is no charge for admission. Park staff noted that anglers are tacitly allowed access to the park for night fishing, but that they must park much further away (near the park entrance) since the facility is gated at night.

Existing Site Conditions

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Existing Fishing Facilities			X	
Parking			X	
Compatibility with Surrounding Land / Water Uses				X
Statewide Transportation Accessibility / Public Transit			X	
Site Aesthetics				X
	Low	Medium	High	
Water Quality (see Appendix B)	X			

Priority for Capital Improvements: **Low**

Facilities within Colt State Park currently offer recreational anglers abundant and varied opportunities for quality fishing access within a scenic park environment. Despite the relatively poor quality of bay waters in the area, the site continues to offer visitors an enjoyable recreational fishing experience and opportunity for good catch; all anglers interviewed at the time of site visit commented favorably on past and current fishing experiences within the park.

As it appears that the Colt State Park is currently maximizing its potential for recreational fishing, additional fishing development at this site would not be warranted. Perhaps the only significant attribute of the site which could be improved upon is the current lack of access to deeper waters. While this could potentially be achieved through the development of a new pier structure along the easterly shoreline, the development of public fishing access to deeper waters would be more appropriate at another location (along higher quality bay waters and in greater need of improved facilities).



Photo 1. Westerly park shoreline and path looking north to North Point.



Photo 2. Typical interior park facilities.



Photo 3. Shoreline walking/bicycle path looking northeast to existing fishing pier along northerly shoreline.



Photo 4. Existing Colt State Park fishing pier looking north.



Photo 5. Fishing from end of the T-pier.



Photo 6. Mouth of Mill Gut looking southeast from fishing pier.



Photo 7. Mill Gut Bridges looking east. Fishing is allowed from the pedestrian/bicycle bridge on the right.



Photos 8A and 8B. Existing parking areas in the immediate vicinity of Mill Gut and the existing fishing pier.